United Nations E/C.12/2016/SR.24

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 June 2016

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Fifty-eighth session

Summary record of the 24th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 7 June 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Sadi

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Consideration of reports (*continued*)

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Sixth periodic report of Sweden (E/C.12/SWE/6; E/C.12/SWE/Q/6 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sweden took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Baralt** (Sweden), introducing the sixth periodic report of Sweden (E/C.12/SWE/6), said that her country was fully committed to its human rights obligations. Its commitment acquired greater significance in times of conflict and large migration flows, when the human rights of vulnerable groups, including women and girls, came under increased threat. Although Swedish society was open, inclusive and based on the principles of diversity and equal opportunities, her delegation welcomed the opportunity to discuss ways of further advancing the cause of economic, social and cultural rights.

3. Sweden's new coalition Government had taken office in 2014, after the submission of the report under consideration, and had begun a series of important reforms focused on the labour market, education, climate change and equal opportunities. In the previous few years, social and economic gaps had widened, but the Government was committed to closing them, its ultimate goal being a socially responsible society in which all persons could participate and to which all could contribute.

4. The Government was committed to achieving full gender equality in all aspects of its work. Its commitment was not only a question of rights, representation and resources, but also a means to increase economic growth. The Government would present a new policy on gender equality later in 2016.

5. The full and equal enjoyment of human rights was a priority. The Government had instructed an investigator to propose a draft law on the incorporation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national legislation. The report had been submitted in March 2016 and a consultation process had begun. An Ambassador for Human Rights had been appointed to raise awareness of human rights, democracy and the rule of law on the international stage. A strategy aimed at strengthening the institutional human rights framework was being prepared and would include a proposal for the establishment of a national human rights institution in conformity with the Paris Principles.

6. International cooperation was essential to the protection of economic, social and cultural rights. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development had provided the international community with a framework for action, and its effective implementation called for more effective cooperation with civil society organizations.

7. The refugee crisis demanded a response based on solidarity and burden sharing. In 2015, Sweden had received 160,000 asylum applications, more than any other member country of the European Union, and approximately 35,000 of those had been from unaccompanied minors. Sweden stood up for the right to asylum, however much of a challenge it presented; in fact, asylum seekers represented a great opportunity for Sweden in the long term, since they would contribute their skills to the country. It was important to enable new arrivals to become established as quickly as possible in order to guarantee their successful integration and ensure positive social and economic development.

8. The Government was working to ensure the equal enjoyment of rights and opportunities by minority groups. It was preparing a review of the Act on National Minorities and National Minority Languages and would soon present a national plan of

action to combat racism and hate crime, including anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and racism against Sami. Many initiatives were being carried out to promote the equal enjoyment of rights and opportunities by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. Among the priorities in that regard was the prevention of violence against LGBT persons. Violence against women was increasing, despite efforts to reduce its prevalence, and the Government was preparing a national strategy to reverse the trend. The strategy would be guided by clear objectives and indicators to enable the effective evaluation and monitoring of its results and would focus on preventive measures, involving both schools and rehabilitation programmes for male offenders. More than €10 million had been allocated to shelter organizations for women.

9. The Government's disability policy was based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, its overall objective being to create a society in which persons with disabilities were able to participate in society without obstacles and to enjoy the same standard of living as non-disabled persons.

10. Employment was an important factor in the protection of social, cultural and economic rights, and the Government aimed for Sweden to have the lowest level of unemployment in the European Union by 2020. Focusing on youth unemployment and the unemployment of persons with disabilities, the Government provided financial support for employers, and was seeking to increase the participation of foreign-born women in the labour market as a means of encouraging integration. Education enabled children to defend their rights and achieve their full potential. In order to ensure that all children had equal opportunities at school, the Government had implemented a number of initiatives to strengthen the quality of education.

11. All countries should return to the core values of humanism, democracy and inclusion for all. To that end, it was vital to ensure equal participation in society, including equal access to information, participation in debates and access to culture. Free admission to the majority of State-owned museums had been introduced to ensure equal access to a shared cultural heritage. Her delegation was grateful to civil society organizations for their work in promoting equality and respect for economic, social and cultural rights.

12. **Mr. Kedzia** (Country Rapporteur) said that, since the State party operated a dualist legal system, the Covenant should be incorporated into national legislation to give full effect to the rights it enshrined and to make it a point of reference and a basis for judicial decisions. He asked what, in practical terms, prevented the State party from taking that step. Although the Supreme Court had repeatedly ruled that domestic legislation must be interpreted in accordance with the State party's international obligations, the courts did not seem inclined to conduct an independent assessment of the consistency of domestic legislation with those obligations. The problem was particularly apparent in the Swedish Constitution, which addressed rights in economic, social and cultural areas less comprehensively than the Covenant. The Committee would appreciate guidance in particular on how to interpret chapter 1, article 2 of the Instrument of Government, "State Goals", which referred, inter alia, to the right to employment, housing and education. Could those rights be invoked before the courts on the basis of that article? And did the other rights laid down in chapter 2 of the Instrument of Government, "Fundamental Rights and Freedoms", require further specification by ordinary laws in order to be invoked in judicial proceedings?

13. It would be helpful for the Committee to learn whether the State party had plans to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. Given that the State party had ratified the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but had not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it could be argued that greater attention was afforded to the justiciability of civil and political rights than to economic, social and cultural rights. The Equality

Ombudsman had received B status accreditation from the Sub-Committee on Accreditation, an indication that it was not fully compliant with the Paris Principles. Why had it not been granted A status? The Committee would also appreciate further information on the proposed creation of a national human rights institution.

14. An update was needed on the timeline for the Nordic Sami Convention, which had been under discussion for more than 20 years. It would also be useful for the delegation to comment on widespread concerns that the Sami Parliament had very limited powers. Despite the protests of Sami and civil society organizations, the Government had decided to expand mining operations in traditional Sami territories. In the light of the proposed increase in the number of mines, the Committee would welcome information on plans to ensure that the rights of the Sami were respected. More broadly, what measures were planned to investigate and remedy infringements of the rights of Sami, in both their current and historical dimensions?

15. The State party was to be commended for the welcome it extended to refugees. The Committee would nevertheless appreciate additional information on the refugee situation from the perspective of economic, social and political rights, in particular regarding the proposed replacement of permanent residence permits by temporary ones.

16. **Mr. De Schutter** said that the Government's reply to the question raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues (E/C.12/SWE/Q/6), concerning the legal framework governing investments in projects outside the State party, including by the Swedish national pension funds, suggested that it delegated responsibility for the necessary ethical and environmental assessments to fund managers (E/C.12/SWE/Q/6/Add.1, paras. 4-6). Given that the Government appointed the board members of the national pension funds and conducted annual assessments of their management, it would seem that it was interested in the ethical and environmental impacts of its investments. The Committee took the position that, to the fullest extent possible, States parties to the Covenant should prevent third parties in other countries from violating Covenant rights. In that regard, it would be helpful to know how the State party would conduct human rights assessments of investments made on its behalf in the future. What steps would be taken to ensure that those investments complied with the rights enshrined in the Covenant? Reports had been received of a number of problematic investments by the Swedish national pension funds, including an investment in a Canadian mining company, Goldcorp, whose subsidiary in Guatemala had been the subject of concerns raised by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

17. **Ms. Shin** said that the State party was well known for its commendable efforts to promote gender equality and social welfare, but that improvements could be made in a number of areas. Regarding the target figure of 40 per cent of women on the boards of listed companies, referred to in paragraph 36 of Sweden's replies to the list of issues (E/C.12/SWE/Q/6/Add.1), the Committee would like to know if legislation was in place to ensure that the target was met. What percentage of companies in the State party came under the definition of listed companies? The Committee was concerned that women working in small and medium-sized enterprises were at a greater disadvantage, in terms of equal and full participation, than those in larger companies. Therefore, did the Government envisage extending the 40 per cent target to cover companies of all sizes?

18. The Committee would like to know what percentage of professors in academia were currently women and what the target percentage was. Was there a long-term strategy to increase female representation in universities? According to information received by the Committee, the State party believed that men tended to earn higher salaries than women because of differences in employment profiles. To address the wage gap and promote real equality between men and women it was necessary to abolish or reduce both vertical and horizontal job segregation. How did the State party plan to do so?

19. **Mr. Schrijver** asked what action the State party was taking to reduce the unemployment rate, which remained relatively high, especially for vulnerable groups such as young people, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. The Government had acknowledged in paragraph 163 of its report that progress had been slow in addressing the issue of unemployment among persons with disabilities. The Committee wished to know whether the State party planned to adapt its policies in that area, for example through the introduction of an employment quota system. Noting that initiatives had been introduced, under the Budget Bill for 2016, to support the employment of persons with disabilities, he asked how those initiatives would work in practice and also about what was being done to improve the employability of persons belonging to ethnic minorities.

20. Would the State party reconsider introducing a statutory minimum wage in order to protect the rights of vulnerable groups? The Committee was concerned about the increase in the number of occupational accidents and diseases and would like to learn more about the causes and what was being done to remedy the problem. What role did inspectorates play in reducing the incidence of occupational diseases and did the State party have plans to conduct campaigns on health and safety in the workplace?

21. He commended the State party on the measures taken to combat sexual harassment in the workplace but noted with concern that such harassment had still not been criminalized and codified in the Penal Code. Would the State party consider taking action to remedy that situation?

22. The Committee was concerned about the decrease in personal assistance benefits under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments and would like to be given an explanation of that trend. Had the cutbacks been carefully assessed, taking into account their impact on persons with disabilities?

23. It had been reported to the Committee that citizens of other European Union States, particularly Roma, had only limited access to social benefits. What measures were being taken to ensure that there was no discrimination in the procedure for assessing eligibility to receive benefits, which were mostly paid at the municipal level?

The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

24. **Ms. Baralt** (Sweden) said that unaccompanied children were the responsibility of the municipalities, of which there were 290 in the State party. On average the State party placed 7,000 children in families each year. However, in 2015 an additional 70,000 children, 36,000 of them unaccompanied, had arrived in the State party as refugees or asylum seekers. Those numbers placed a great strain on the municipal authorities, especially in the major cities. All unaccompanied children were provided with access to health care and social assistance services. Following an assessment of their needs, including any special needs, they were placed in families or other suitable facilities. More than 90 per cent of the unaccompanied children were boys between 15 and 17 years of age, a group which the Government had not encountered in any significant numbers in the past. The municipalities therefore had to adapt their approach to target that specific group, which rendered more difficult the task of rehousing many Swedish children in precarious family situations.

25. It was essential that the Government direct its efforts in the future to speeding up the registration of unaccompanied children and finding suitable homes for them. The reforms already made to the migration system would be reviewed with the aim of improving its efficiency through the introduction of additional temporary measures, if necessary.

26. Much progress had been made on gender equality and on reducing the pay gap in particular. However, the existence of labour market segregation meant that women often worked in lower paid jobs. To improve the situation the Government had in the previous year invested 10 billion kronor to enable the municipalities and welfare system to support

women in employment. Negotiations between trade unions and other stakeholders had recently resulted in significant increases in the salaries of nurses, for example. Both the wage gap and the pension gap were targeted for reduction, and to that end the Government had entered into a dialogue with the social partners and had reintroduced annual salary reviews for the labour market.

27. Sweden had not traditionally used quotas to promote the equal representation of women in public office. Such equal representation had always been achieved voluntarily, supported by education and awareness-raising efforts.

28. The Government had appointed a national coordinator to deal with the issue of social exclusion and poverty affecting persons who did not have the right to reside in Sweden. Although European Union citizens were entitled to stay in the country for work or study purposes, many Bulgarians and Romanians were unemployed and vulnerable, often surviving by begging. Cooperation mechanisms had been set up with the Governments of both Bulgaria and Romania in order to explore options to better integrate those individuals into society.

29. The cost of providing social protection services to persons with disabilities had increased significantly in recent years, while the number of beneficiaries had remained the same. The Government was therefore reviewing the system to ensure that it was sustainable in the long term.

30. **Mr. Jacobson** (Sweden) said that the Government intended to further analyse the relevant case law before making a decision on whether to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Sweden generally either transposed international instruments into its national legislative framework or introduced a specific law to apply the provisions of the international instrument in question. In preparing to ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, a comprehensive review had been carried out to ensure that Swedish law complied with the Covenant. No statistics were available regarding domestic court cases in which the Covenant had been directly invoked.

31. **Ms. Stenson** (Sweden) said that since 2014, the Government had allocated 15 million Swedish kronor annually for the promotion and respect of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, at national level. The County Administrative Board of Dalarna had been commissioned to coordinate the work of county administrative boards all over Sweden in the area of human rights for 2014-2016, while Uppsala University had been commissioned to manage a training programme for 2014-2017 to teach central government employees how human rights affected their everyday work; that programme would be evaluated at a later point. A further initiative, which stemmed from an agreement between the Government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, was under way to strengthen respect for human rights and knowledge of how human rights could be given effect in local government services.

32. The Equality Ombudsman had been granted B status under the Paris Principles for two reasons: its mandate was limited to equal rights, and it lacked autonomy because appointment and dismissal were at the discretion of the Government. A proposal on establishing a human rights institution was to be put before the Riksdag (Swedish parliament) in the hope of securing A status accreditation.

33. The Government was committed to promoting a thriving Sami culture and intended to implement more ambitious policies to strengthen opportunities for the Sami people to develop their own economic and social life, including their right to self-determination. The long-running negotiations on the Nordic Sami Convention were still ongoing and no end date could yet be provided. The budget for the Sami Parliament had been increased, and a review of the appropriation directions for the Parliament had resulted in the amendment or

removal of certain reporting requirements. The dialogue with the Sami Parliament was to be formalized.

34. **Ms. Tekin Befrits** (Sweden), referring to Sami land use rights, said that consultations in line with international obligations had a long tradition in Sweden and were a fundamental feature of the country's democracy. The Government had studied carefully the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples regarding the issue of extractive industries, and on free, prior and informed consent. While transparency and consultation in good faith were of great importance, free, prior and informed consent was a safeguard rather than a veto power. States had to impose limitations on certain rights, including the right to property; however, such limitations had to comply with standards of necessity and proportionality with regard to public purpose requirements. Such was the aim of the Reindeer Herding Act and the Expropriation Act. The Government encouraged dialogue between mining companies and villages at a very early stage, and at the local level, villages affected by geological surveys must be consulted before prospecting could begin.

35. **Mr. Nilsson** (Sweden) said that, with regard to migration issues, new regulations had been introduced in January 2016 whereby school-age migrants must be given diagnostic tests in literacy and mathematics within two months of their arrival at a school. Based on the results of such assessments, school principals decided the grades to which students should be assigned and what support they required. The Swedish National Agency for Education had been tasked with providing support to schools and municipalities to improve the quality of education for migrants of all ages, including compulsory schooling, and language introduction programmes in upper-secondary schools. That work included analysis of the programmes with a view to making recommendations for their improvement. A total of 2,000 places in adult education had been earmarked for migrant students and persons who did not have Swedish as their mother tongue, with a view to facilitating their entry into the labour market.

36. The number of women working in scientific disciplines in academia had increased over the past 20 years, and was now close to 50 per cent in all categories, with the exception of professors. In that category, the figure stood at 25 per cent, up from 12 per cent in 1999. The Government was conducting an overview of recruitment goals with the aim of increasing the number of women professors.

37. **Ms. Frimann-Clausen Engel** (Sweden) said that the Government's annual review of the national pension funds stressed the importance of developing work on environmental and ethical issues, including human rights impact assessments, and in 2014 a separate external report had been prepared on the integration of those issues into the management of the funds. A screening process was in place, and companies which had breached rights or which were suspected of having done so were invited to enter into a dialogue with the funds. If the outcome of such dialogue was not satisfactory, the company was then excluded from the investment portfolio. A project launched in 2011 aimed to increase engagement with the mining industry, and human rights impact assessments had to be carried out in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework (Ruggie Principles). In 2008, the national pension funds had requested a human rights impact assessment report from Goldcorp, which was currently available on the company's website.

38. **Ms. Söderberg** (Sweden) said that since the second half of 2015, the Swedish Work Environment Authority had assisted the Swedish Migration Board in its efforts to ensure that police and customs units were able to work in line with the legal framework on migration. The Government had created a secretariat within the Ministry of Employment to ensure that new proposals were implemented as quickly as possible. Tripartite discussions with social partners had resulted in the creation of a fast-track system to employ skilled refugees in shortage occupations. The system had initially covered chefs, nurses and

doctors, and had been expanded to include other sectors. Since 2015, the State, municipalities and county councils had been working together to get refugees into employment or education as quickly as possible.

39. In June 2015, women had accounted for 29 per cent of executives on the boards of listed companies. If that figure did not rise to 40 per cent in 2016, the Government would take action. In 2014, the wage gap between women and men had stood at 13.2 per cent in favour of men. The National Mediation Office had analysed the wage gap data using standard weighting, and had found that in both the public and private sectors, 5 per cent of the difference could not be accounted for statistically. The Office had also analysed the methods used in reaching central collective agreements on wages, and had found that only objective arguments were deemed acceptable in the negotiations. The Government had mandated public employment services to promote gender equality in all their work.

40. Unemployment rates were decreasing, including for young people and the long-term unemployed; however, young people with disabilities and persons who had not completed upper-secondary education were mostly unable to enter the labour market. No statistics were available on employment rates for ethnic minorities, with the exception of foreign-born women. The Government was working to expand wage subsidies for young people and new arrivals, and a special method was in place to support employment for young people with disabilities. Wage subsidies were currently being assessed to eliminate any overlapping areas.

41. In early 2016, the Government had approved a work environment strategy with three main priorities: no deaths should occur in the workplace; employees should have a sustainable working life; and their psychosocial needs should be addressed in the work environment. New regulations on organization and social rules introduced in March 2016 had been widely disseminated via a film on Facebook, which had been viewed by the majority of young people in the country.

42. She confirmed that sexual harassment was a crime in Sweden.

43. **Ms. Stenson** (Sweden) said that in 2015 the Government had strengthened protections against discrimination in the form of inadequate accessibility for persons with disabilities. The protections covered all areas of life, including employment, education, provision of goods and services, and medical and social services. Failure to take reasonable measures to increase accessibility could be deemed to constitute discrimination. Measures could include improvement of the physical environment and the provision of alternative communication methods or of personal support. The Government was examining ways to strengthen protections even further, and hoped to be able to offer more information on that subject in the near future.

44. The inclusion of Roma people was a priority for the Government, and a strategy adopted in 2012 aimed to address that issue in the areas of education, employment, health and housing. Progress had been made and five pilot municipalities had worked with Roma communities to implement measures to increase their participation in society. Trained mediators had helped to increase the rates of school attendance and employment among Roma people, and to bridge the trust gap between the Roma and the public sector. The Government had allocated almost €6 million to the next stage of the strategy, for 2016-2019, and the strengthening of Roma civil society would be an important factor in its success.

45. The Commission against anti-Gypsyism, appointed in 2014 and headed by Thomas Hammarberg, the former Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, was intended to help bridge the trust gap between Roma communities and the rest of society. In 2014, the Government had presented a white paper detailing abuse and rights violations suffered by Roma people in the twentieth century. The aim of the paper was to provide recognition to the victims and their relatives, and promote understanding of the

contemporary situation of the Roma minority. The Government's Roma strategy incorporated gender issues as a cross-cutting theme.

46. **Ms. Bras Gomes** asked whether the State party intended to broaden its anti-discrimination legislation to include all grounds of discrimination listed in article 2.2 of the Covenant, and why the State party required a further year to consider whether it would ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant.

47. **Mr. Kedzia**, noting that he had not received a response to his earlier questions, asked whether the State party intended to change its legislation regarding the burden of proof, given that the capacities of the Sami population were probably more limited in that regard.

48. **Mr. Martynov** said he would like to hear the delegation's views on why the State party was making slow progress on the issue of accessibility for persons with disabilities, and why there was a growing gap in employment rates between persons with and without disabilities.

49. **Mr. Schrijver** said that he would appreciate clarification on whether or not sexual harassment was prohibited in the criminal sense: the delegation had confirmed that it was, while paragraphs 207 and 213 of the report appeared to suggest that there was no Penal Code provision on the subject.

50. **Mr. Uprimny** asked why the Government was resistant to the introduction of a bill to incorporate the entirety of the Covenant into domestic law, and why the central government did not step in and take action in cases where local governments did not uphold economic, social and cultural rights.

51. **Ms. Shin** said that she would appreciate an answer to the question she had asked earlier about the percentage of all companies accounted for by the listed companies to which quotas for female board members would apply. She wondered whether discrimination against women accounted for the share of the wage gap between men and women that could not be explained away by other factors, such as women's greater likelihood of being employed part-time. Was their greater presence in part-time work not itself a result of discrimination?

52. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** asked how the State party quantified the maximum of its available resources, which it had a duty to allocate to efforts to realize Covenant rights. He also asked what share of those resources was allocated to measures taken during the reporting period to achieve the realization of the rights recognized in articles 6 to 15.

53. **Mr. Dasgupta** asked whether the persons responsible for the cases of forced marriage mentioned in the replies of the State party to the list of issues (E/C.12/SWE/Q/6/Add.1, para. 78) had been prosecuted and, if so, what the outcome had been. He also asked whether there had been any reported cases of child marriage outside Sweden involving a Swedish national or resident, whether marriage in such circumstances was an offence under Swedish law and, if so, what practical steps were taken to address such offences. He wondered why, as had also been mentioned in the replies to the list of issues, young women and girls were not included in the standard surveys taken to shed light on such issues as the prevalence of violence against women. He requested a comment from the delegation on reports that Sweden was a destination for female victims of sex trafficking. Had Sweden not banned the purchase of sexual services?

54. **Ms. Shin** asked whether the State party intended to amend its legislation to ensure that any act of sexual penetration committed without the consent of the victim fell under the definition of rape; why so few of the many reported cases of sexual assault or rape led to prosecutions and convictions; what was being done to promote an understanding of gender-based violence among law-enforcement and judicial officials; and whether the authorities

were studying the phenomenon of date rape among adolescents. She also asked what was being done to address the problem of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons and how the law banning the purchase of sexual services had affected the broader problem of sex trafficking, apart from street prostitution. She would welcome a comment on the Government's plans to place temporary restrictions on the right of asylum seekers to residence permits and family reunification.

55. **Mr. Pillay** asked what strategies had been adopted to reduce poverty among members of marginalized groups in the State party. What had those strategies achieved?

56. He also asked whether the shortage of affordable housing had led to increased homelessness; why no special measures had been taken to combat the residential segregation often faced by particular population groups; what policies had been put in place to address the obstacles to decent housing encountered by Roma families; and why the State party had no statistics on the clearing of informal Roma settlements.

57. **Ms. Shin** said that the Committee would welcome a broad overview of poverty in the State party, including the situation of children in poverty. Quantitative information on the shortage of affordable housing, especially in cities, would be of particular interest. In connection with the eviction of Roma families, she asked whether Swedish municipal authorities were aware of their obligation to uphold the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living.

58. She wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that no one was committed to a psychiatric institution and forced to submit to treatment solely on the basis of his/her disability; why so many more women than men were subject to abuse, including forced electroshock therapy, while they were undergoing psychiatric treatment; and whether persons committed to psychiatric institutions had access to legal aid. She understood that refugees and asylum seekers under the age of 18 were entitled to free health care but wondered what happened once they became adults. Were there any health initiatives designed specifically for Roma women and girls?

59. **Mr. Uprimny** asked whether the State party had any plans to collect more data on drug use in its territory, scale up needle exchanges, allow opioid substitution therapy in the prison system and ensure the widespread availability of medications, such as naloxone, that blocked the effects of opioids.

60. **Mr. Abashidze** said that he would appreciate additional information on the efforts made by the State party to ensure that the children of national minorities or indigenous peoples could attain high levels of literacy in their native language. In that connection, he wondered whether Swedish municipalities were able to find enough teachers capable of teaching in the languages of the country's national minorities and what steps the Government had taken to broaden access to bilingual education and improve teacher training in the languages of national minorities.

61. He wondered whether monitoring compliance with the Anti-Discrimination Act was hindered by the Swedish law prohibiting the collection of ethnic or racial statistics. He would welcome further information on the grants awarded by such institutions as the Institute for Language and Folklore, on any progress made towards the adoption of the Nordic Sami Convention and any initiatives taken to address criticism of the Sami Rights Bill. He also asked what steps had been taken to raise the status of the Sami Parliament.

62. Mr. Kerdoun asked why the children of national minorities were no longer required to demonstrate a basic knowledge of their minority language. He also wished to know whether the children of immigrants could in fact enrol in school even if they did not have a valid residence permit.

63. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente** said that he would welcome specific information on the efforts made by the State party to enable everyone to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. It would be interesting, for example, to know more about the international cooperation agreements entered into by Swedish universities, which were referred to only briefly in the State party's report. He would appreciate a clarification of the State party's assertion that a connection to the Internet was not an absolute right. Lastly, he asked whether reports that the participation of women in science in Sweden was below the European average were accurate and, if so, what the Government intended to do to address that issue.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.